Atonement of Jesus Christ, "The Extent of the Atonement"

- **Prayer**

- Hymn - "Ah, holy Jesus"

Introduction

- This is a wonderful hymn written by a **Lutheran Christian Poet, Johann Heermann.**

- **Written in the approximate time frame (early 17th century), the Church Council at Dordt in the Netherlands published the 5 Points of Calvinism as a response to the Armenian Remonstrance 5 points.**

- The author understood **the subject from God's Word we are studying**.

- **As part of our series on the "Doctrines of Grace," we are studying "Limited Atonement."**

- **We introduced the subject last week, focusing on the Nature of Atonement itself. (See lesson with that title).**

- **We used the following definition of the Atonement: "The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation."**

- **It is a clear definition emphasizing the outcome of our Savior's suffering and death. He earned our salvation. It was a perfect accomplishment!**

- **We then stated that the best way to understand "Limited Atonement" is to study the nature of Atonement.**

- **In other words, what our Lord Jesus accomplished in His sufferings and death.**

- Our Hymn writer summarizes some of **the key aspects of the atonement** that we discussed in our last class.

- Starting in Verse 3, "**Lo the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered**"

- **QUESTION: What is the writer referring to that we discussed last week? Substitution**

- We looked **at Isaiah 53 4 -6. He has borne our griefs," "carried our sorrows," "pierced for our transgressions," "crushed for our iniquities," and "with his wounds we are healed.**"

- **Of course, the great NT statement on Substitutionary Atonement in 2 Corinthians 5:21**

- **"For our sake, he made him be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**." **THE Wonderful GREAT EXCHANGE. He took our sin, and in exchange, we are counted to be righteous in the sight of God!**

- We see something as well, perhaps more implied, of **Propitiation** in this hymn.

- **Question: Can anyone please remind us what that Bible term means in Scripture?**

- **The term "propitiation," in the context of atonement, means "satisfaction" or "appeasement."**

- In verse 4, the hymn writer describes our Lord's "**death of anguish**" and "**bitter passion**."

- **Our Savior satisfied** God's justice by taking upon himself the punishment we deserve. **He appeased the just wrath of a Holy God**.

- **Our Savior is our propitiation**!

- **I John 4:10 reveals the motivating cause of propitiation**. "**In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**

- **Scripture teaches us that the atonement reconciles God to His people, and His people to God**!

- The apostle Paul rejoiced in this great truth. Romans 5:11-12 "**For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**"

- Finally, to summarize, last week, we also stated that we have redemption in the death of our Savior**.**

- We said that the Lord Jesus Christ purchased salvation for his people through **the work of the atonement.**

- The word Redemption in Scripture means "**to buy out." Especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom.**

- **Praise God! He has bought us out of the slave market of sin into union with Himself!!**

- **Galatians 4:4-5 "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons**."

- **What should are response be to these great blessings that come by God's love and grace?**

- **One last mention from our hymn – The last verse: "Therefore kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee, I do adore thee.**"

- **We should ADORE our great Savior**! In response to His Love, we should adore Him and commit ourselves fully to living for Him!

- Or in the words of those who right now are in heaven! **Revelation chapter 5:12-13**

- "**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"[13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever**!"

- **That should be the cry of our hearts this morning**!!!

The Extent of the Atonement

- We want to focus now on the "**Limited**" description in the phrase "**Limited** Atonement."

- **I said last week it is an unfortunate label!**

- **Certainly, God is NOT limited**.

- Certainly, the **gospel of salvation should be proclaimed to every nation** and every person!!

- **There is NO limit with regard to who should hear the gospel! There should be no limit in our desire to see the gospel of our Savior be spread to all people and all nations!!**

- Perhaps a much better term would be **definite atonement**.

- Meaning Jesus was a substitute for, redeemed, satisfied justice, and reconciled a **definite number of people. Namely, HIS Elect**. Those the Father gave to the son!!

- **We ARE not saying that is a small number**!!! That number is so vast no one could ever count them!!

- **Definite Atonement also means that the death of our Savior has INFINITE Merit and is sufficient to pay for the sins of who the Father has given to the Son. There is no limit to the sufficiency of the ATONEMENT.**

- **Unless someone believes that everyone who has ever lived will go to heaven, everyone believes in some decree of limited atonement. How?**

- One could ask if Jesus died to pay the penalty of sin for every person who ever lived, why isn't everyone saved from their sins?

- So, if Jesus died for a person's sins, but they ultimately must pay again for those sins in eternal punishment, **doesn't that also seem to limit the atonement**?

- So truly, the term limited, I think, is somewhat unfortunate!!!

Scripture Proofs

- **I want us now to turn our attention to specific scripture passages that support this doctrine of definite atonement, specifically the EXTENT of the Atonement.**

- **We can look at many different categories from Scripture that validate this great truth.**

- **We will look at several Scripture passages!!**

Father gives to the Son, a people

- **The first category includes references that indicate that during the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, He was aware of a definite group of people whom the Father had given to him.**

- **John 6:37-39 - [37] All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."**

- **There is perfect UNITY in the Godhead**. The **Father Gives to the Son**, **the Son redeems those given to Him**. And of course the not mentioned here we know the **Spirit draws by grace those the Father gives to the Son**.

- **John 17: 6-9 - I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. [7] Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. [8] For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. [9] I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours."**

- **Later on in this section of the gospel Jesus prays for His people who have not yet believed.**

- **John 17:20**. "**I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."**

- Of course, this **ties directly into the doctrine of Election** that we have studied!

- That God in His grace, and His grace alone, **determined to redeem** a people for Him from the bondage of sin!

- So clearly in the Gospel accounts, the Lord Jesus **expressed a specific knowledge of and concern for those whom the Father had GIVEN to Him**!

Definite Transactions

- **The next type of Scripture references that teach unlimited atonement is what we can call definite transactions**.

- By that, I mean **specific transactions** that occurred between the Father and Son when Jesus died.

- **These transactions have very specific reference to those who would believe.**

- Of course, this ties back to the biblical nature of the Atonement!

- **Specifically, Redemption**. In redemption, a purchase takes place! A transaction.

- **Ephesians 1:7- 8:** "In him, **WE have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight."

- **Who has redemption according to that passage? WE**

- **Who is WE**?

- Who is Paul writing the letter to? "**Verse 1 "To the saints who are in Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus**!

- **Personal Pronouns are very important in God's Word for understanding the meaning of many passages**.

- **You, We, They, Us, etc., should all be interpreted in a passage's context**.

- When they are not, many errors can result. **This is especially true when discussing God's purpose or the atonement's extent.**

- **Galatians 1:3-5 is another example of a definite transaction between the Father and Son**!

- "**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, [5] to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen**"

- **Question: Who is the Apostle writing to? Verse 2: "To the churches of Galatia**."

- One final one, though we could mention many more!!

- **Romans 5:8 –11 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation**."

- **Once again who is the letter written to? Chapter 1 of Romans. Verse 6-7 – Paul's introduction to the Letter**

- "You who are **called to belong to Jesus Christ**,[7] To all those in Rome who are loved by God **and called to be saints**."

- **So, we see over and over again in the apostolic teaching!**

- **God provided Christ, and the sacrificial death of Christ produced a very definite result for a definite group of people**.

Explicit passages stating Jesus died for HIS People

- **In addition to these passages showing the Father giving a specific people to the Son, Scripture also explicitly states that Jesus died directly for His people**.

- From the very onsite of the Incarnation, when the Angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph in a dream not to be afraid to take Mary as His wife and that the baby conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

- **Do you remember what else the angel told Joseph? The angel told Joseph what the baby's name must be!**

- **Matthew 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will <u>save his people from their sins</u>."**

- **It was always intended that the purpose of His coming was to save <u>His People</u> from their sins. VERY Explicit!!**

- Remember Paul's counsel to the Ephesian Elders in **Acts 20:28**.

- "**Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he <u>obtained with his own blood</u>**."

- **Who was obtained by the precious blood of our Savior? The** CHURCH. HIS BRIDE!!!

- **<u>We also have the words of the Good Shepherd,</u>** our Savior, in **John 10:11-15**

- "**11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep**.

- **It is hard to be any more EXPLICIT! Over and over again, the Scripture qualifies those for whom Jesus laid down His Life! It was for His Sheep. The Elect of God. The Bride of Christ. Very definite work**!

- One last passage**! Romans 8:31-34**

- "**What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but <u>gave him up for us all</u>, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us**."

- **Who is the "us all" in verse 32, in which God did not spare his own son**? The next sentence! "**Who shall bring a charge against God's ELECT**!"

Scripture Passages Used to Support Unlimited Atonement

- I want us to take a brief look at a passage or two that, at first glance, may seem to support an unlimited atonement.

- Turn to John chapter 3. A very well-known portion of the Word of God.

- We don't have time to read from verse 1, though I wish we did, as **understanding the passage's context is crucial**.

- Starting at verse 13. Jesus, of course, is speaking to the Pharisee, whose name was Nicodemus. **He explains that a new spiritual birth is necessary** to enter the kingdom of God.

- In verse 14, the Lord begins to discuss with Nicodemus the upcoming death of the Son of Man.

- **READ John 3:14-18**

- **14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."**

- **Many of our Christian friends will state that this passage affirms that Christ died for the sins of everyone who ever lived**!

- **However, the Apostle is not saying that**! He says that God's love motivates him to give his Son and that He loves the World of sinners.

- **The "World" can have different meanings in John!**

- **Here, it simply means the vast humanity of mankind, including Jews and Gentiles from every language, tribe, and nation**.

- Jesus compares him being lifted up on the cross, and the bronze serpent revealed in Numbers chapter 21.

- **Do you remember the account?** The Israelites had sinned and rebelled against God, Moses complaining about the food and water!

- In God's righteous anger and judgment, He sent poisonous snakes to bite and destroy His people.

- But God graciously provided a means of healing the people who the snakes bit.

- **The means of deliverance for the people there was to do what?**

- **<u>Look at the Bronze Snake</u>**!

- **What would have happened if the Israelites did NOT look at the lifted-up snake on the pole?**

- **DEATH – The SNAKE was only effective if you looked!!**

- I want to make the **point that this passage in John 3 does <u>not</u> <u>teach unlimited or limited atonement</u>**!

- **It teaches us of God's great love and grace. Whoever you are in this World of fallen sinners must look to God's son and His death on the cross if you ever hope to obtain salvation**!

- Because if you do NOT believe in God's provision, you will be condemned (verse 18).

- **I think this passage teaches the gracious universal offer of the gospel and NOT an unlimited atonement.**

- **All are welcome to look to the Savior! None are excluded from the OFFER**!!

- **We do not have time to look at it, and I am not sure a Sunday school hour is the appropriate setting to study the word "world**."

- **Suffice it to say that the Apostle John used this word more than any NT writer**!

- The word is **used 185 times in the New Testament**, **<u>105 of which are by the Apostle John</u>**.

- **It can have different meanings depending on the context**!!! It can mean Jews and Gentiles, or sometimes just a large group of people and several other meanings

- One example is when the Pharisees, in their disappointment, said, "Look**, the world has gone after Him" (Jn 12:19). Surely the world in that context does NOT mean every person alive!!!**

- It can also mean the **general public like in John 7:4** when Jesus' brothers said **"For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world**."

- **I need to end it there**. **I had more passages** I would have liked us to think about that seem to suggest an unlimited atonement on the surface, **but time will NOT allow it**.

- **Instead, in the remaining time, I would like us to think about the Effects of the doctrine of Definite Atonement.**

- **By this, I mean how, then, should this impact our lives in very practical ways**?

- **Let me ask the class: Why is this doctrine important to Christians?**

The Effects of the Atonement

- **We have already stated in our opening hymn our response should be ADORATION!**

- **God has accomplished and applied our Redemption** through the work of our blessed Savior!!

- **When our Lord Jesus cried, "It is finished," prior to His death, it was NOT so that there would be a POTENTIAL that some would be saved! No, it was once and for all FINAL that His people will with 100% certainty be SAVED!!**

- **My point is that this truth should be a great comfort to Christians,** filling **our hearts with Assurance**. Certainly, that is one reason this truth is so important.

- **Question: What other reasons can you think of with regard to the importance of definite atonement?**

1) **It's the revealed word of God. It is SOUND Doctrine! Titus 2:1:** "**But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."** I remember talking to a young Christian about the importance of sound doctrine. Her comment to me was **doctrine divides! That is tragic**! These truths are vital to growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord!

2) **Another important effect is that it <u>exalts God's grace and</u> <u>brings honor and glory to God—o</u>f course, that is the purpose of our existence!**

Revelation 4:11: "**Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created**."

3) **Another reason is it <u>Magnifies the Wisdom of God</u>. Turn please to Romans chapter 11**

Romans 11:33-36: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! [34] "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"[35] "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen

- **These verses fall at the end of the lengthiest Scripture teaching on the need for and the provision God has made for Salvation.**
- **Paul is marveling at what?**
- **The WISDOM AND Knowledge of GOD!**
- **Are we doing the same thing?** The studies on the Doctrines of Grace should not puff us up with knowledge! It should cause our hearts to marvel at the wonders of God's Wisdom and Knowledge!

4) **Of course, it also magnifies the Love, GRACE, and Mercy of God!**

5) **There are many more reasons why this great teaching of definite atonement is so important, but I will end by stating that this <u>doctrine is a tremendous motivation or encouragement to Christians in many areas!</u>**

- **<u>It encourages and motivates Evangelism</u>! Some people wrongly say, "If I believed that Christ died only for the elect, wouldn't that discourage evangelism?"**

- **Of course, the answer is NO, NO, a thousand times NO!!!**

- **Jesus has secured salvation**! **It is a certainty**.

- **What is NOT certain for us is who will respond!** Only God knows. But our business is to spread this great gospel to everyone. **Salvation is of the Lord, and He will accomplish His purposes**!!

- **Along with evangelism, this truth motivates us to Christian obedience and service. Serving the Lord should be our heart's desire because He first loved us!**

- **Listen to what the Apostle wrote to the Galatians. May this be our heart's desire as well!**

- **Galatians 2:20: " I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith <u>in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me</u>."**

- **Dear Brothers and Sisters. The Love of Christ and what God has accomplished in the work of Jesus on the cross should motivate us to worship, obey, and love God and each other!**

- **In the words of the Apostle to the Corinthian church, "<u>The Love of Christ Constrains me.</u>"**

- **Does it constrain you and me this morning? May it be so!**

- **IF TIME <u>Augustus Toplady</u>. "From whence this fear and unbelief."**

- **Close with prayer!**